

State of Maine Judicial Branch

Guide to the Use of Service Animals

A service animal is defined by state and federal law as a dog that has been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities.

The Judicial Branch welcomes service animals in all areas of our courts and facilities where the public is allowed to go.

Pets and other non-service animals **will not** be permitted in our facilities. Dogs whose sole function is to provide comfort or emotional support do not qualify as service animals.

The work or task a service animal has been trained to provide must be directly related to the person's disability. To determine whether your dog is a service animal, Judicial Branch staff may ask you:

- Is the dog a service animal required because of a disability?
- What work or task has the dog been trained to perform?

However, Judicial Branch staff **will not** request proof of your disability, or require special documentation about the status of your service animal.

Service animals perform a variety of tasks, such as guiding a person who is blind, alerting a person who is deaf, pulling a wheelchair, calming a person with PTSD during an anxiety attack, or reminding a person to take prescribed medications.

Care of Your Service Animal

You are responsible for the care and supervision of your service animal while visiting Judicial Branch facilities. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), service animals must be harnessed, leashed, or tethered, unless these devices interfere with the service animal's work, or a person's disability prevents using these devices. Judicial Branch staff **will** ask you to remove the service animal from our facility when:

- Your dog is out of control and you do not take effective action to control the animal; or
- Your dog is not housebroken.

The specific needs of service animals and their handlers may vary, and the Judicial Branch will provide reasonable accommodations whenever possible. Please ask our staff which areas may be available for you to tend to your service animal, and let them know of any additional needs.

Questions or Complaints

The Judicial Branch is committed to providing equal access to all of our courts, programs and facilities throughout the State of Maine. If you have questions about this policy, or feel that you have not been treated fairly, please contact:

Access to Justice Coordinator
Administrative Office of the Courts
PO Box 4820, Portland ME 04112
Phone: (207)287-3214
TTY: (207)822-0701
accessibility@courts.maine.gov